

## Glossary

This glossary is intended for the purpose of clarifying items in the *Guide*.

**Adult education:** One of the four core instructional components that local Even Start projects must provide as part of “family literacy services.” The adult education component provides high-quality, intensive instructional programs in adult literacy or adult basic education, including English language literacy as necessary, that leads to economic self-sufficiency. (Sections 1231(1), 1235(4) and 9101(20), ESEA; 20 U.S.C. 6381, 6381d(4) and 7801(20).) Section 1235(10) of the Even Start statute (20 U.S.C. 6381d(10)) requires adult education services to be based on scientifically based reading research to the extent that research is available.

**Attendance patterns:** Information about how and when participants attend instructional components, determined by analyzing participant attendance data. Attendance patterns help determine whether participants are attending enough class hours for a long enough time to achieve their program goals.

**Attendance rate:** A percentage based on the number of hours a participant attended program services out of the total number of instructional hours he or she could attend. Attendance rates help determine whether participants are attending program services consistently.

**Bar graph:** A graph that uses a bar to display data for variables, including groups over time. The height of the bar shows how many things or people are in a group.

**Benchmark:** A standard or point of reference (often a milestone related to an outcome).

**Collaborator or collaborating agency:** As used informally in the Even Start context, a collaborator or collaborating agency or organization generally means an organization, agency, or entity that may provide program services but is not a formal partner in the “eligible entity” partnership that receives the sub-grant from the SEA.

**Continuous improvement:** The use of evaluation data to make sure that program instruction and services keep improving over time.

**Core instructional components:** All Even Start programs are required to provide instruction in 1) adult literacy; parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency (*adult literacy or English language instruction*); 2) age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences (*early childhood education*); 3) training for parents to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children (*parenting education*) and 4) interactive parent-child literacy activities.

**Criterion-referenced tests:** Standards-referenced tests or proficiency tests that measure how well a student performed against a certain criterion or standard.

**Curriculum:** The sequence of instructional content and skills designed to ensure that students understand and are able to achieve proficiency on standards.

**Disaggregation:** Separating data into groups by variables (e.g., attendance rate, length of time in program, age, pre-test status) in order to see patterns.

**Early childhood education services:** One of the four core instructional components that local Even Start projects must provide as part of “family literacy services.” The early childhood education instructional component provides high-quality, intensive, and age-appropriate early childhood educational services to prepare children for success in school and life experiences (Sections 1235(4) and 9101(20), ESEA; 20 U.S.C. 6381d(4) and 7801(20)). Section 1235(10) and (12) of the Even Start statute (20 U.S.C. 6381d(10) and (12)) require early childhood education services to be based on scientifically based reading research to the extent that research is available and to include reading-readiness activities for preschool children based on scientifically based reading research to the extent available, to ensure that children enter school ready to learn to read.

**Evaluation question:** A clear statement in the form of a question to elicit information that an evaluator and program staff wish to study.

**Executive summary:** A brief, condensed version of a technical report. Drawing on all major sections of the report, an executive summary may be a stand-alone document, either included in front of the technical report or reproduced separately and disseminated as needed.

**Expected outcomes:** The effects on participants that can be anticipated as a result of full participation in a program that is implemented as intended.

**Fidelity:** Delivering actual services according to their original design.

**Focus group:** A group of people who have shared an experience (for example, parents of school age children) and are asked to reflect on that experience through a semi-structured discussion.

**Focused inquiry:** A systematic exploration of a program interest or concern. The evaluator and program staff develop one or more guiding questions for the inquiry; the evaluator collects and analyzes data.

**GPRA indicators:** By requirement of the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA), each federal executive agency has established sets of statements of measurable outcomes.

**Grade-equivalent or developmental age score:** The school grade level or chronological age for which a given score is the estimated median or mean.

**Independent evaluation:** A program evaluation which uses an independent evaluator (also referred to as an outside evaluator or an external evaluator) to provide an objective and unbiased report of findings for program improvement. The statute requires each local Even Start program to have an independent evaluation.

**Independent evaluator:** A consultant to the Even Start program, the independent evaluator generally should not be an employee of a partner responsible for administering the Even Start project. An exception would be an employee of a large school district or institution of higher education who may serve as the project evaluator provided that he or she does not work in the department that administers the Even Start program or provides program services.

**Instructional approach:** The combination of materials and teaching methods or pedagogy that are used to deliver the curriculum.

**Instructional opportunity:** The number of instructional hours offered during the project year (see program intensity).

**Instrument:** A measure or protocol designed to capture information from respondents in a systematic way. An instrument can include tests of knowledge or ability, surveys of perceptions, rating scales to assess satisfaction, and so forth.

**Interactive literacy activities (ILA):** Interactive literacy activities between parents and children (formerly called parent and child activities [PACT]). One of the four core instructional components that local Even Start projects must provide as part of “family literacy services.” The interactive literacy activity (ILA) instructional component provides high-quality, intensive, interactive literacy activities between parents and their children. (Section 1235(4) and 9101(20), ESEA; 20 U.S.C. 6381d(4) and 7801(20).) Section 1235(10) of the Even Start statute (20 U.S.S. 6381d(1) requires instructional components to be based on scientifically based reading research, to the extent that research is available.

**Interim report:** A periodic report to meet a project’s real-time information needs before a final report is complete. The interim report may 1) report progress toward achievement of participant outcomes, 2) describe accomplishments and challenges in program operations at a specific point, and 3) present findings on a specific area of concern.

**Learning milestones:** Key achievements that mark progress toward longer term educational outcomes.

**Likert scale:** A rating scale measuring the strength of agreement with a statement, usually four or five points on a scale represented by a number.

**Line graph:** A figure that conveys information that is plotted on a graph. A line graph can show results from two or more variables across time.

**Mean hours of attendance:** The average number of hours of attendance. The mean is obtained by dividing the sum of participants' attendance hours by the total number of participants.

**Median attendance rate:** The midpoint in a series of numbers of hours that participants attended. Evaluators often analyze median rather than mean hours because the median better reflects the wide **range** of hours attended.

**N:** The number of people or things in a group that were studied, expressed as N= (e.g., N=15)

**Norm-referenced test:** Any test for which the scores are compared to the scores of a "norming group" (a representative cross-section of subjects who have taken the same test). Norm-referenced tests show how the test-taker's score compares to the distribution of scores. (For a test-taker at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, it means 49 out of a hundred test-takers would have scored lower than the test-taker.)

**Outcome measure:** The measure of expected change—usually the difference in scores before and after an intervention or the attainment of particular criteria.

**Parenting education:** One of the four core instructional components that local Even Start projects must provide as part of "family literacy services." The parenting education instructional component provides high-quality and intensive instructional programs for parents about how to be the primary teacher for and full partners in the education of their children and support their children's educational growth. (Section 1235(4) and 9101(20), ESEA; 20 U.S.C. 6381d(4) and 7801(20).) Section 1235(10) of the Even Start statute (20 U.S.C. 6381d(1) requires instructional components to be based on scientifically based reading research, to the extent that research is available.

**Participant attendance:** The actual number of hours that a participant attended classes or participated in program services.

**Participant learning outcomes:** Expected learning results for all participants. These outcomes include state-required performance indicators.

**Participation calculations:** Measurements of different program variables—program intensity, participant attendance, attendance rate, and length of enrollment. These calculations should be based on instructional activities within the four core Even Start components.

**Participation expectations:** Program requirements or policies for continued participation. The expectations state, for example, the number of hours of attendance or the percentage of time families are expected to attend program services.

**Participation variable:** An amount. Program intensity, participant attendance, attendance rate, and length of enrollment are variables in Even Start family participation patterns. The evaluator and program staff analyze variables to understand and explain differences in participants' achievement rates.

**Partnership:** An eligible entity that may apply for an Even Start subgrant is a partnership between one or more LEAs and one or more other non-profit public or private entities.

**Percentile:** A number showing how many cases, out of every hundred, fall below the point (score, amount) in question.

**Performance indicators:** Measurable indicators or standards established by states in response to the requirement to develop program quality indicators in three areas of adult learning achievement and three areas of child learning achievement; also called performance standards, state literacy indicators, or quality indicators.

**Pie chart:** A round (pie) chart that shows 100% of a variable divided into different parts; used to show the relationship of parts to a whole.

**Pre-post testing:** Giving the same test before a program intervention, and just after the intervention.

**Professional development:** As defined in section 9101(34) of the ESEA, specific activities that, among other things, improve and increase teachers' knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach, and enable teachers to become highly qualified. Professional development includes activities that are high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom, and, activities that advance teacher understanding of effective instructional strategies that are based on scientifically based research. (Section 9101(34), ESEA; 20 U.S.C. 7801(34).)

**Program director:** The person(s) directly in charge of the local Even Start program; also called program coordinator, program leader, project manager, or program co-coordinator.

**Program elements:** As used in the Even Start statute, fifteen activities and services that local Even Start programs must provide (Section 1235, ESEA; 20 U.S.C. 6381d). These required program elements include: identifying and recruiting

families most in need of Even Start services; screening and preparing participants for full participation; developing flexible scheduling and support services; offering high-quality, intensive instructional programs in the four core instructional components; meeting specific staff qualifications; training staff; offering home-based instructional services; offering year-round services; coordinating with other programs; delivering instructional programs based on scientifically based reading research; supporting regular attendance and retention; creating reading readiness activities for preschool children based on scientifically based reading research; ensuring continuity of services; providing services to families most in need; and using an independent local evaluation for program improvement.

**Program intensity:** The total number of hours of instruction the average participant would receive if he or she were enrolled for the entire project year and had a 100% attendance rate.

**Program theory:** The underlying logic that explains how particular program activities and approaches are intended to produce short- and long-term results.

**Qualitative methods:** Evaluation approaches that are primarily descriptive and interpretative. Qualitative research typically uses observation, interviews, and document reviews to examine quality, meaning, and context.

**Quantitative methods:** Evaluation approaches that primarily involve numerical measurements and data analyses by statistical methods.

**Range:** All the values (amounts, numbers, scores) from lowest to highest; the distance a whole group covers.

**Raw score:** Basic units of observation; stated as the number correct, the number of errors, or the time for completion.

**Relational database:** A collection of data items organized as a set of formally-described tables from which data can be reassembled in many different ways without having to reorganize the database tables.

**Reliability:** A measure of stability, that is, the extent to which results will be the same each time a measure is repeated under the same conditions.

**RFP or request for proposal:** To be eligible to receive a new subgrant of Even Start funds, an eligible entity must submit an application to the state educational agency (SEA). The application must be in the form and contain or be accompanied by the information required by the SEA, and include specific information required by section 1237 of the Even Start statute. (Section 1237, ESEA; 20 U.S.C. 6381f.) Some states refer to the application as an RFA or request for applications.

**Sample:** A smaller part of a larger group of people (the whole group is “the universe”). The sample may or may not be chosen by chance. When used as a verb, sample means to choose this smaller group.

**Scientifically based reading research (SBRR):** Research that (a) applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties; and (b) includes research that –

- (i) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
- (ii) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
- (iii) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and
- (iv) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review. (Sections 1208(6) and 1232(e)(4), ESEA; 20 U.S.C. 6368(6) and 6381a(e)(4).)

**Significance:** The degree to which a value is greater or smaller than would be expected by chance. Typically, a relationship is considered statistically significant when the probability of obtaining that result by chance is less than 5%.

**Stakeholder:** Individuals, groups, or organizations with an interest in how well a program functions and/or who have decision-making authority over program funding, implementation, and use of evaluation findings.

**Standard score:** A type of score derived from the standard deviation and the mean of a distribution of scores. Standard scores are superior to other types of derived scores because they can be added, subtracted, or averaged and facilitate comparisons across tests. Also called scale score.

**Standardized:** A consistent way of giving, scoring, and/or interpreting tests; the same or similar tasks are given under the same conditions to all students and scored the same way.

**State coordinator:** The state education official responsible for administering the federal Even Start grant to the state.

**Support services:** One of the 15 program elements that each local Even Start program must provide when those services are unavailable from other sources and are necessary for an eligible family's participation in Even Start activities. As indicated in the statute, examples of such support services include child care for the period that parents are involved in the Even Start program and transportation for the purpose of enabling parents and their children to participate in the Even Start program. (Section 1235(3)(B) and (C); 20 U.S.C. 6381d(3)(B) and (C).)

**Technical report:** Typically the end-of-year written report, it is the most informative of all reporting formats. It contains comprehensive analyses of participant outcomes, answers key questions, summarizes all evaluation findings, and presents recommendations for improvement.

**Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF):** Federal block grant program that provides assistance and work opportunities to needy families by granting states federal funds and flexibility to develop and implement their own welfare programs.

**Triangulation:** Studying an issue using several different methods (e.g., a survey and focus groups), to determine whether or not results converge.

**Universe:** The full population in contrast to a sample, or a portion of a population group. An evaluator might give tests to all primary grade students in a district (the universe) rather than sample or select from the primary grade students.

**Validity:** The measure of how well a scale or test shows what it is supposed to show. There are several types of validity—each (concurrent, content, criterion, predictive) must be evaluated separately.